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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USNATO 000239

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SUBJECT: RUSSIA OFFERS PESSIMISTIC VIEWS OF AFGHANISTAN AND
KOSOVO AT JUNE 25 NRC

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Richard G. Olson, Jr. Reasons: 1.4 (b)
) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Russian Ambassador to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov informed the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) during its June 25 meeting that although Afghanistan is a more civil place than in 2001, the mission in Afghanistan was failing and that much more needed to be done in the areas of counter-narcotics, government reform, economic development, and military strategy. Several Allies challenged and rebuffed his dire predictions and his assertions that Afghans wanted ISAF to leave. Turning to Kosovo, Russian Ambassador Rogozin argued that NATO and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon were "improvising" on UNSCR 1244 and especially criticized NATO for taking on "new responsibilities" in Kosovo. Some Allies argued that the new tasks were necessary for improving Kosovo. At the end of the meeting, Rogozin asked the SYG for his views on the NAC's trip to Kyiv, characterizing the trip as NATO "agitating" for Ukrainian NATO accession while also expressing concern over Ukraine's movement towards NATO. The SYG ended the discussion by refuting these assertions, arguing that the NAC went to Kyiv to listen to Ukrainians.

¶2. (SBU) Deputy Commander Submarines North Captain David Dittmer briefed the Council on the successful completion of the joint NATO-Russia submarine training exercise Operation Bold Monarch. Charge Olson thanked members of the Council for sending representatives to the U.S.-hosted peacekeeping training session in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. END SUMMARY.

RUSSIA'S IMPRESSIONS OF ISAF'S MISSION

¶3. (C) During the June 25 meeting of the NATO-Russia Council, visiting Russian Ambassador to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov acknowledged that Afghanistan is a more humane place than it was in 2001. He added that he appreciated the opportunity for an open dialogue between Russia and NATO, noting that both share common concerns over Afghanistan's stability. After offering these few positive comments, Kabulov began his critique of the current situation in Afghanistan by arguing that the number of unstable provinces susceptible to Taliban influence has risen in direct correlation with the increase of ISAF units in Afghanistan since 2005. At first he declared that there was a military solution. However, Kabulov later added that NATO needed to emphasize improving economic conditions for all Afghans. In his view, this

approach, rather than the "American ideas of aerial spraying," would help decrease the opium trade. Additionally, he stressed that ISAF had failed to establish an open dialogue with Afghans and instead talked to them "down the barrel of a gun," resulting in increased sympathy for Taliban. Finally, turning his attention to Afghanistan,s political environment, Kabulov argued that Western-style democracy can not work unless it takes into account Afghanistan,s history and culture. Asserting that Karzai's NATO-backed government was weak, Kabulov speculated that if NATO left Afghanistan the government would fall in a month. Kabulov said that by engaging in the aforementioned practices, NATO was repeating Soviet mistakes and assessing the "cold practical realities of Afghanistan" incorrectly. After this critical assessment, Kabulov claimed that Russia wanted to be a partner with NATO on Afghanistan. However, during his intervention Kabulov only suggested that Russia supply the ANA with Russian-made weapons, such as AK-47s (while criticizing NATO for purposefully having the ANA adopt the M-16). Finally, Kabulov argued that NATO needed to encourage clerics and other groups to work to build a more unified and religiously moderate Afghanistan.

14. (C) Many Allies thanked Kabulov for his remarks, but some (Bulgaria and the Netherlands) challenged his assertions that democracy would not work in Afghanistan and that ISAF was unpopular and unwanted. While thanking Russia for forgiving Afghan debt and providing financial assistance to Afghanistan, Charge Olson pointed out that Kabulov's characterization of aerial drug eradication as potentially causing adverse health effects was incorrect. He explained

USNATO 00000239 002 OF 003

that the U.S. was not employing aerial spraying against poppies and that all US government counternarcotics efforts were done in accordance with GOA policy. Hungary asked whether Russia had considered non-military assistance to Afghanistan, such as repairing or further developing Soviet occupation-era infrastructure (e.g. dams), a question which Kabulov did not answer. Finally, several Allies asked whether Kabulov believed there were viable political alternatives to Karzai; he responded that he did not see any at present.

15. (C) After Kabulov,s presentation, the SYG and Allies thanked Rogozin for Russia,s unilateral offer to allow certain ISAF-related cargo to transit Russia via several ground routes. When Rogozin complained that no one was making use of the offer, the SYG pointed out that complementary transit agreements with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan plus Ukraine were being discussed.

16. (C) Rogozin ended his intervention by advocating for more NATO-Russia counter-narcotics training at the Moscow facility. The SYG answered this request by explaining that Afghan bureaucracies did not consider this out of country training a priority (in part because it is not cost-efficient), but noted that the NATO staff would continue to encourage Afghan contacts to attend future NRC training. (Note: this is now on track for a future training session. End Note.)

KFOR,S MANDATE

17. (C) Rogozin criticized ongoing NATO activities in Kosovo. He stated that UNSCR 1244 is the only source of authority in Kosovo because Kosovo,s Constitution is "irrelevant" and its Ahtisaari plan roots lack any international legitimacy. Rogozin said that UNSYG Ban Ki-moon,s letters to Belgrade and Pristina and NATO,s new tasks were "improvising" on UNSCR 1244 something that neither have the authority to do. He contended that only the UNSC could amend or modify 1244 and it had not done so. Additionally, Rogozin said NATO was acting in an irresponsible and de-stabilizing fashion by

ignoring its safe and secure environment mandate and embarking on these new tasks. Rogozin claimed (without offering specific evidence) that Serb monasteries were being robbed, that there was a broad trend of ethnically targeted Serb property seizures, and that there were indiscriminate robberies in Kosovo. He also said that KFOR had ended its impartiality toward Kosovo,s internal politics when it decided not to recognize local Serb municipal elections in Mitrovica. However, after making this assertion, Rogozin referred to balloting elsewhere in Kosovo as legitimate. The Czech Republic responded to Rogozin,s claims by arguing that KFOR,s new tasks were in the international community,s interest because they focused on maintaining a modest force and channeling existing Kosovo armed elements into a small professional security force. Finally Rogozin criticized the U.S. for "arming the Kosovars" and questioned whether U.S. public statements of "sending aviation gas" to Pristina are really legitimate. Charge Olson rebutted Rogozin by stating that our Excess Defense Articles (EDA) agreement is a routine international agreement we have concluded with many, indeed most, countries, including Serbia.

OPERATION BOLD MONARCH/PEACEKEEPING

¶8. (SBU) US Navy Captain David Dittmer, in his role as Deputy Commander Submarines North, briefed the Council on Operation Bold Monarch. Dittmer informed the Council that this successful operation included the first mating of a Russian rescue vehicle with a NATO submarine. Parties broadly expressed great satisfaction with the level of cooperation achieved and look forward to the next Bold Monarch exercise in 2011.

¶9. (SBU) The SYG noted that cooperation in the NRC

USNATO 00000239 003 OF 003

Peacekeeping Working Group has intensified and has been characterized by an exchange of views on stability operations; the organization of visits to centers; and past and future tabletop exercises. Also, Charge Olson thanked Council members for sending representatives to the two-day peacekeeping and security operations lessons learned conference at the U.S. Army,s Carlisle Military Barracks in Pennsylvania.

NAC TRIP TO UKRAINE

¶10. (C) Rogozin raised the NAC,s June trip to Kyiv, asking the SYG about his impressions from the trip while arguing that Ukraine,s movement toward NATO was an "acutely sensitive topic in Russia" that could destabilize Russia,s bordering areas. He stressed that the NAC visit was unwelcome in Russian eyes because NATO was "agitating for Ukraine to become a member state." The SYG rebutted the Rogozin portrayal by stating that no "agitation" had taken place, describing the visit as an information exchange between NATO representatives and Ukrainian politicians and citizens. The Czech Republic told Rogozin that it hoped Russia would look favorably upon the upcoming similar NAC trip to Georgia.

¶11. (C) To end the meeting, Rogozin announced that Russian MILREP ADM Kuznetsov would depart in July and would be replaced by General of the Army, former Russian Ground Forces Commander, Maslov.
OLSON